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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 000787

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SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE NEXT STEPS: INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS MAY  
DIFFER FROM ZIMBABWEAN VIEWS

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Don Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b)  
and (d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. On 10 April, PolOff attended a conference entitled, "Building International Consensus on Zimbabwe," during which diplomats, academics, and Zimbabwean civil society members shared similar interpretations of the 29 March election, but differed on a way forward. While everyone agreed that voting day was peaceful, no one defended the delaying of results, which the ANC's Head of International Affairs called a "technical coup." Looking ahead, international guests seemed to support the idea of a transitional government, while Zimbabweans on the panel strongly argued that such an arrangement would nullify their votes. END SUMMARY.

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ANALYSES OF ELECTION AND AFTERMATH  
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12. (SBU) On 10 April, PolOff attended a conference entitled, "Building International Consensus on Zimbabwe," during which diplomats, academics, and civil society sat on a panel to share similar interpretations of the 29 March election, but differed on a way forward. Every speaker recognized that Zimbabweans voted on 29 March without harassment, but no one defended the delay in announcing the results. Isabella Matambanadzo, Open Society Institute of South Africa's (OSISA) Program Director for Zimbabwe, argued that by not releasing the results, "Mugabe is holding our votes hostage." Ebrahim Ebrahim, ANC Head of International Affairs, called the delay a "technical coup," adding that Zimbabwe has suffered from a complete judicial collapse since the elections. "Lawyers are afraid to defend and judges are afraid to hear cases," he said.

13. (SBU) As for the results declared thus far, Matambanadzo said the fact that ZANU-PF won 97 parliamentary seats means that ZANU-PF remains significant and cannot be ignored. Zimbabwean academic Dr. Ibbo Mandaza, however, opined that ZANU-PF rigged the parliamentary results to give them greater bargaining power after the election. He also asserted that in a truly free and fair election, Mugabe would not have received more than 4 percent of the presidential vote because "it's impossible more people voted for Mugabe than Makoni." (BIO NOTE: Mandaza was a primary instigator of Makoni's candidacy and remains a Makoni advisor. END NOTE)

14. (SBU) Many speakers also focused on MDC weaknesses.

Professor Brian Raftopoulos of the Solidarity Peace Trust pointed out that the MDC could have won at least nine more seats in Parliament if the two MDC factions had united before the election. Mandaza criticized the MDC for declaring victory without announcing actual results from the parallel voting center. Had the MDC done this, he argued, the MDC may have preempted the current situation. Instead, Mandaza complained that the MDC is counting on South Africa to help it, even though the SAG has no capacity to do so, and on SADC. Mandaza concluded by criticizing all opposition parties, saying they should have coalesced by now and included some more reform-minded ZANU-PF members. Only the Swedish Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Sten Rylander, had kind words for MDC, pointing out that they have "the moral high ground having won," but later also admitted that the MDC's weak links to regional leaders is a weakness.

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HOME GROWN SOLUTION THE ONLY WAY  
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15. (SBU) The European Commission's Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Xavier Marchal, said that the only solution to Zimbabwe's problems must be "home grown," but then emphasized the role of the regional and international community in the process. He laid out two possibilities: (1) respect the current Constitution, which calls for a runoff if no party receives 50 percent; or, (2) have a managed transition in which the presidential election would be annulled and a new government and new constitution put in place. (NOTE: A third scenario, in which Mugabe declares himself the winner by a majority vote was not discussed. END NOTE) If there is a runoff, Xavier advised, international observers should return immediately and in greater numbers. He also said that SADC should demand that its recommendations be implemented immediately, including allowing greater media freedom and access for all parties, controlling formal and informal

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campaigning, condemning security forces threatening pronouncements, and verifying voter rolls.

16. (SBU) All international members of the panel seemed to support the idea of a transitional government of national unity, while Zimbabwean panel members uniformly did not. Acknowledging the possibility, Ambassador Rylander emphasized that "(such a transitional government) must be on their own terms." Ebrahim also argued for a transitional government, suggesting that the MDC is open to the idea. Ignoring possible constitutional requirements, Ebrahim advised that a runoff should be avoided because "ZANU-PF could unleash violence and create a very ugly situation."

17. (C) Zimbabwean civil society members, however, argued that a transitional government would ignore the will of the people. Richard Smith of the Zimbabwe Solidarity Forum pointed out that the real danger is an imposed solution like Kenya's current government, "which is falling apart." Matambanadzo echoed Smith's comments, adding that Zimbabweans also are not interested in a runoff, "which is an insane option since results weren't free and fair before or after the actual election," and that "Zimbabweans are only interested in results."

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IMMUNITY FOR HARD-LINERS POTENTIAL PROBLEM  
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18. (SBU) Whatever the solution, both Ebrahim and Rylander argued that it must involve an honorable exit for Mugabe without retribution. Ebrahim, however, cautioned that the people surrounding Mugabe will remain a problem. "So Mugabe gets a farm, amnesty, etc. Others won't and will fight to the end," he said. (NOTE: Mugabe's immunity was hotly discussed during the break, with most international observers

noting that Nigeria's handover of Charles Taylor after he was guaranteed immunity will make it difficult for anyone to persuade Mugabe that an immunity arrangement is ironclad.  
END NOTE)

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SADC UTILITY QUESTIONED  
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¶9. (SBU) Raftopoulos argued that SADC's credibility was undermined because the elections have not expressed the will of the Zimbabwean people and yet, SADC has already endorsed them as free and fair. Rylander also told the audience that the EU has purposefully avoided speaking out on the issue to give South Africa and SADC space and to not exacerbating the situation, but also intimated a SADC blessing will not be enough for the international community. "We (the international community) will need to have confidence in any new government before we reengage," he warned. British High Commissioner to South Africa Paul Boateng agreed, adding that the UK has not, as rumored, already agreed to allocate one billion pounds to Zimbabwe's recovery.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) Despite the international community's attempts to be sensitive to Zimbabwean desires, it was obvious after the three-and-half-hour long session that Zimbabwean panel members may not be on the same page as those from the greater international community. Also noteworthy, Kenya's transitional government and the problems it is facing appear to be affecting Zimbabweans view of the viability of a unity government.  
BOST